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NSC BRIEFING

5 March 1957

THAILAND

- I. First Thai elections in five years proved to be heady experience in democracy for Bangkok public. When vote-rigging--for which police director general Phao was presumably responsible--became too blatant, crowds rioted and government declared "state of emergency" 2 March.**
- A. Although Bangkok's 9 assembly seats hotly contested, 7 gov't candidates were declared victors.**
- B. Voting marked by stuffed ballot boxes, fraudulent tabulation: in one 3,000-strong precinct, 8,000 votes counted.**
- II. Major importance of affair is chance it gives Army Chief Sarit to dispose of his strongest rival, Phao.**
- A. Sarit--given command of police for duration of emergency--appears emerging from crisis as "hero;" he reported pressing for Phao's ouster as scapegoat.**
- B. Sarit frankly told student demonstrators that elections were dishonest; jovially said he wished he could join protest but feared possibility of arrest as subversive if he did.**
- Phao now appears under heavy cloud: reportedly stripped of authority and turning to bottle for consolation.**
- III. Neither Thai boss, Premier Phibun, nor pro-West orientation of Thailand likely to suffer.**
- A. Subversion, Commie influence in demonstrations negligible.**
- B. Premier Phibun, in past, however, has sought maintain balance power between Sarit and Phao as matter of personal expediency; restoration of such balance may prove difficult now.**

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